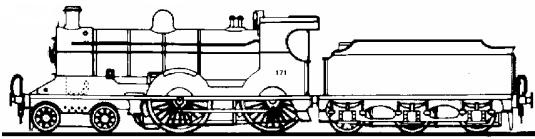


Railway Preservation Society of Ireland



June 2000

NEWS LETTER

DONATIONS

Lady Dunleath: We are very grateful to Dorinda Lady Dunleath for giving the Society £1,000 towards the upkeep of No.85. This is the latest in a number of donations from the late Lord Dunleath and his wife. Thanks also to Lord O'Neill for his help in facilitating the arrangements.

CL&STS: Also the latest in a series of grants, we are grateful to the Carrickfergus Literary and Scientific Trust Society for a grant of £2,000 towards the completion of the flooring in the carriage shed at Whitehead. Member John Richardson had a helping hand in arranging this grant.

Legg Trust Fund: John also arranged a further donation of £300 for the carriage shed floor from the Legg Fund. Many thanks to John and the governing boards of the donating bodies.

MEMBERSHIP

How Long?: Following his request in the February News-Letter, the Secretary, Paul McCann, would like to thank the members who took the trouble to advise him of the year in which they joined the Society. However, there are still approximately 300 members who joined before 1980 whose dates are unknown.

It would be appreciated, if you are in this category, if you would let the Secretary know when you joined. Thank you.

Standing Orders: A few members have

been affected by our bank being more rigorous in checking account numbers on incoming standing orders. We are sorry if this has happened to you but it was NOT our fault and arises from a change in the bank account about 8 years ago when the originating standing orders were not updated as requested.

OPERATIONS

"Steam Enterprise": A very well-filled train operated on the Society's return to the GNR main line. No.85 and 8 coaches left Great Victoria Street Station in a re-enactment of the Enterprise of former days.

Despite the high costs of running this train, the Operations Committee will be looking favourably on establishing it as a regular event again if the success of the first operation can be maintained.

"Easter Special": This has become a regular Good Friday event, and this year proved to be no exception. No.461 hauled six well-filled coaches to Mullingar, in what could be her last Dublin based operation for a while. The return train had Park Royal 1383 added.

"Bangor Belle": On Easter Saturday No.171, now back once more in its blue livery, operated the now familiar return trips from Belfast Central to Bangor, once again supported by North Down Borough Council's team of entertainers.

"Easter Bunny": On Easter Monday, at the request of NDBC, the annual Bunny trains operated to Bangor rather than

Whitehead. The paths were the same as those on the Saturday, the only difference being the Easter eggs and Bunny on board. Once again a very successful day out - trains to Bangor seem to be going from strength to strength.

Easter Train Rides: At the request of the Whitehead Community Association, who were organising various events on that day, train rides operated at Whitehead on Easter Monday. Despite running the normal "Easter Bunny" trains, a few willing volunteers held the fort at Whitehead.

The only real problems were no diner, nor anyone to accompany shed visits. Due to lack of passenger accommodation more round trips were done than on a summer afternoon. While it is not something that we would be keen to do again on the same date as a mainline train, it was good to see the operation being a success.

"American Mail": What was a very successful tour was only marred by the fact that No.461 was unable to participate. While running light engine from Dublin to Cork, the locomotive developed trouble with its big end and had to be failed at Limerick Junction. A hasty rejig of the schedule by Evan Parnely ensured that the Saturday afternoon shuttle from Cork to Cobh could still go ahead.

As always, the highlight of the tour was the climb out of Cork on the Sunday morning, and a very creditable start it was too. Due to the steep gradients between Cork and Mallow those photographers on the lineside bus managed to get the train at four locations, including the triumphant arrival in Mallow over the Blackwater viaduct.

Despite being hors de combat, No.461 allowed participants the chance to see three steam locomotives in Limerick Junction for the first time since the Society's other three mainline locomotives, No.4, No.184 & No.186, appeared there on the "South Wexford" in 1978.

"Steam & Jazz": A very fine time was had by all on the evening of 26th May as our mystery Jazz train headed off into the night. After the serving of wine and snacks in the waiting room at Whitehead station, music and dance continued at Carrickfergus and Lisburn station

platforms.

Come and see if our second train on 23rd June will repeat this itinerary or take us to pastures new.

"Greystones Shuffle": At the time of writing (28th May) No.171's brakes are giving trouble and today's first Greystones shuttle has had to be diesel-hauled.

Schools Days: There will only be one day of operation - on Tuesday 6th June. It was felt that it would be easier to man a single day, despite all the schools being dealt with together.

"Atlantic Coast Express": Due to the failure of No.461 at Limerick Junction, and as No.85 is prohibited from working to Derry, the commercial decision was taken to operate the Greystones trains with No.171 and to postpone this operation until later in the year.

"All Stations": The Ulster Architectural Heritage Society outing to the stations of Dublin will not now be going ahead.

Mid-Summer Barbecue: Unfortunately, due to engineering work on the Sligo line, the very popular annual barbecue train to Mullingar has had to be cancelled.

"Belfast Lough Express": The Laganside Corporation in Belfast has chartered a train to operate on Saturday and Sunday 24th & 25th June. There will be two return trips from Carrickfergus to Bangor each day and one in the opposite direction. This is an extension of the "Bangor Belle" operation originally planned for this weekend.

"Strawberry Fair": The operation to Enniscorthy and Rosslare operates this year on 1st July.

International Bachelor Festival: A bit of a mouthful, but simply a charter by the Mullingar organisers of the festival on 15th July. This will be a run from Dublin to Mullingar, with 2 optional trips to Killucan - tickets available at usual outlets.

Open Day: Promising to have more attractions than previous years, the Open Day and the following day's train rides are being run in conjunction with Whitehead Community Association.

"Portrush Flyer": Yet more cancellations

due to engineering works. Last year we could not run to Portrush due to the state of the Branch. This year we are informed that the branch will be closed entirely when the University at Coleraine stops for the summer.

Despite fears expressed about the NIR network, we are told that the plan is to relay the branch over the summer with concrete sleepers and rails retrieved from the Belfast-Lisburn line. The current facilities at Portrush are to be retained, although future plans may include selling off that part of the station occupied by Platform 1 and upgrading the island platform with canopies, etc.

To be included in the work on the branch is the refurbishment of the access line to the turntable at Coleraine, currently in such a state that NIR are reluctant to permit a train to operate to Londonderry as turning facilities here are doubtful.

If all of the above comes to pass the future of the Society's historic operations to Portrush will be assured.

Film Work: Further to the report in the previous issue, filming took place on 26th and 27th March in Pearse station for "Rebel Heart". No.461 and 7 coaches were used on one day and 3 coaches only on the other. The event went smoothly, with the only problem being the film company's desire to add artificial dirt to No.461's pristine and two-day-old paintwork.

Footplate Experience Course: Our first ever course took place on 8th April at Whitehead. It was not a pre-advertised event as an approach was made from a member of the public. It was agreed that a course would be run to test the feasibility of it becoming a regular event.

The participant arrived at 10:30; he was given membership; was provided with overalls, hat and boots; lit up No.3; was given a comprehensive tour of the site, including the mechanics of locomotives; received an introduction to steam locomotives on the SG3 model; oiled locomotive; lunch; light engine run along platform; fired and drove during major shunt of site; finished at 5:30.

Lessons learned - better with at least 2 participants, maximum 4; brake van

required from which non-active participants could view footplate; a formal sequence of shunts should be set up.

NIR Crew Training Course: As part of the formal procedure to train and certify NIR steam drivers, a course was held at Whitehead on 9th April. Attendees were NIR drivers S Glass, W Gillespie, D Turkington, and Inspector S Moore. The course, prepared by P Scott and I Pryce, included: introduction to steam locomotives using the SG3 model; a film on firing techniques; a tour of footplate apparatus; preparation of the locomotive; firing practice; use of injectors; written examination; practice shunt with No.171; question and answer session.

Feedback from drivers was positive with an indication that they found the course useful. NIR have indicated that participation in the course and the documentation arising therefrom will be used as part of the certification process by which drivers and firemen will qualify for footplate acceptance.

Further sessions are planned, in which other footplate crews can participate. It is also hoped that retired IÉ inspector Tony Foley will be involved in furthering the prospects of IÉ crews.

LOCOMOTIVES

No.4: Lining up, fitting and boring of axleboxes is under way. It is planned to wheel the locomotive soon. Rebuilding of both side tanks is in progress. Tanks are basically new but using the old fittings and parts of the cab ends.

No.461: The damage from the failure at Limerick Junction (a hot big end on the fireman's side) was too extensive to repair on site and the locomotive will come to Whitehead for repair and running in. It is possible, though not definite, that No.461 will remain based at Whitehead for her last season in traffic before boiler overhaul. At present, it is not known how long repairs will take but a provisional running-in date is set for 18th June.

GNR(I) No.131: There have been various rumours circulating regarding the future of this locomotive, recently removed from

Mallow to Inchicore. All that is known at present is that moves are being made to restore this engine for traffic and it is hoped that the Society will be able to play a constructive part.

CARRIAGE & WAGON

Dublin Set: The following is the set for this season - Brake 1916, Bredin 1335, Laminat 1463, Diner 2421, and Park Royals 2423, 1416 and 1383, giving a seating capacity of 306 seats. 1383 returned to Dublin on the Good Friday trip, and has since had her wheels turned.

Diner 88 made its last appearance for this season on the film train in late March. She is now in the ramps in Inchicore, receiving attention to woodwork. She will also receive refurbished bogies. Her place will be taken by 2423, which has a tea bar fitted. This coach will remain in Mullingar after the July trip, where it will receive an overhaul, as well as having a brake and a wheelchair accessible toilet fitted. Thus altered, it will become a brake vehicle, and will presumably have to be renumbered into the 19xx series in accordance with GSR CIÉ numbering practice.

Bogies for 1142 are nearing completion. This coach will return to the set after the launch of 351, of which more anon.

GENERAL

Register: Following concerns raised at the AGM in March, Council have decided to set up a register to which interested members can submit their names for consideration for any future sub-contract opportunities which may arise.

In the absence of sufficient volunteer manpower, it is recognised that on occasions there is no escaping the requirement to pay for urgent work on certain Society projects. Before engaging an outside sub-contractor, the new register will be used to ascertain if the work can be done by members, albeit on a paid basis.

It is regrettable that such a system is required but such is the nature of the current volunteer scene.

Any member interested in the scheme is asked to supply the Secretary with details of relevant skills and availability.

Enquiries: Please note that the "Ashgrove House" address and phone number on the back of your membership card is purely for enquiries relating to southern operations. Likewise, the northern phone number and Carrickfergus PO Box address are for northern operations. All other enquiries should be made to the postal or e-mail addresses at the end of this News-Letter.

WHITEHEAD

Turnout For The Better: By the end of March all the old wooden interlaced sleepers at the turnout at the Larne end of the platform road were replaced with concrete sleepers. This was soon put into commission with the returning Bangor Easter train trips and was deemed a sound and solid job by those on No.171.

On The Floor: The donation of £2,300, already mentioned, will enable completion of the stone and concrete flooring within the carriage shed. This will make a very big difference to our programme and already 40 tonnes of stone and 6 cubic metres of concrete have been laid, and the plan is to continue with the programme in the summer months.

Little Weed: Finally, the site has been given its first dose of weed killer during the recent heat wave (in Whitehead anyway) and an earlier scrap drive has removed a lot of rubbish, so we should be looking good for the School's Day and the Sunday Train Rides.

Where You Come In: Through the summer site work will also continue every Tuesday night and we would hope to start scrapping some of our redundant coaches. All helpers would be very welcome.

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